

Challenge Commitment Policy for Current Performance Track Program Facilities Renewing Their Membership

Background

Facilities renewing their membership in the National Environmental Performance Track (NEPT) Program will have to make four (in the case of small facilities, two) new future performance commitments. Renewing members will be able to select commitments associated with aspects from nine different categories, including energy use, water use, materials use, air emissions, waste, preservation/restoration, discharges to water, product performance, and a miscellaneous category. A supply chain category may be added to this list later this year.

The NEPT program strongly encourages that applying facilities closely align their commitments with their significant aspects and related objectives and targets as identified in their EMSs. In addition to addressing facility activities, products, and services that can interact with the environment, these commitments can benefit the local or regional environment, or even address national/global issues of concern. Such issues may include local air quality (e.g., in a non-attainment area), regional water resource limitations, or nationwide problems associated with acid rain. Of course, facilities may continue to choose more facility-specific commitments because they are easier to fulfill or are economically advantageous, such as commitments to reduce energy, water use, and hazardous waste generation.

The NEPT Program, in an attempt to challenge member facilities to respond to local, regional, or national environmental priorities, is instituting a policy whereby current NEPT members, when renewing their membership, can receive “credit” for addressing a regional environmental priority through the NEPT performance commitment process. The *Challenge Commitment Policy* addresses this goal.

Challenge Commitment Policy Summary

A reapplying Performance Track member facility making a future performance “challenge commitment,” defined as a commitment that addresses a regional environmental priority, may count that single challenge commitment as two future performance commitments. Thus, such a facility would only have to make three future commitments (rather than the normal four) so long as one of the commitments addresses the regional priority.

Policy Details

- Each EPA Regional office, in consultation with their respective state(s), may establish a challenge commitment for its region. In setting a challenge commitment, the Region must ensure that it addresses a regional environmental priority as established by a governing authority. Governing authorities include local governments/regulatory authorities (e.g., state air control boards), state governments, EPA regional offices, and EPA HQs.

- When designating a challenge commitment, a Region shall identify no more than one category and no more than two aspects within that category. The commitment must:
 - have a minimum quantitative target associated with it (HQs can provide additional guidance in setting numerical targets) and
 - be memorialized in a memorandum to HQ from the Regional Administrator.
- Challenge commitments established by Regions shall be communicated to renewing members in advance of the program renewal period, allowing enough time so that facilities can reasonably respond with a relevant project. Challenge commitments shall be posted on the NEPT web site.
- Facilities may only take advantage of a challenge commitment established by the region in which the facility is located.
- The facility shall commit to the challenge commitment for a period of three years (i.e., until the next renewal period).
- The challenge commitment policy is applicable only to current NEPT member facilities that have clearly demonstrated a commitment to the NEPT Program and have made environmental improvements during their first three years in the Program.
- Facilities can take advantage of only one challenge commitment allowance. If there is more than one challenge commitment aspect available in a region, the facility can choose them both, but would only receive credit for one challenge commitment; i.e., facilities participating in the challenge commitment program will make no less than three commitments.
- Small facilities (as defined by NEPT) may select a challenge commitment, but they are not permitted to count that single challenge commitment as two future performance commitments. The Performance Track Program already accommodates small facilities by reducing the number of future commitments from four to two. Allowing small facilities to take advantage of the challenge commitment replacement policy would result in a small facility having only one commitment. One commitment is not consistent with the status of Performance Track members as leaders and does not reflect the program's commitment to multi-media environmental protection.